

Livestock, Dairying And Poultry

General Importance

Dairying and livestock raising are important farming activities in Mason County, being second only to farm forest production. In the 1951 Census there were 25 farms specializing in dairying and an additional 43 sold milk as a sideline product. Twenty-one farms were classified as livestock farms raising livestock for marketing. There were 19 farms specializing in raising over 60 more produced poultry and eggs on a part-time basis. The entire livestock farming industry accounted for about \$522,670 in sales, of which 85 percent was derived from dairy and livestock products.

The value of livestock approximated \$797,150 when last enumerated by the Census in 1951. Beef cattle and horses are the most valuable domestic animals raised, valued at over \$200,000. Milk cows are second, valued at \$252,000, on dairy farms. Horses are third in value, at \$20,400.

Total Value of Mason County Livestock: \$797,150

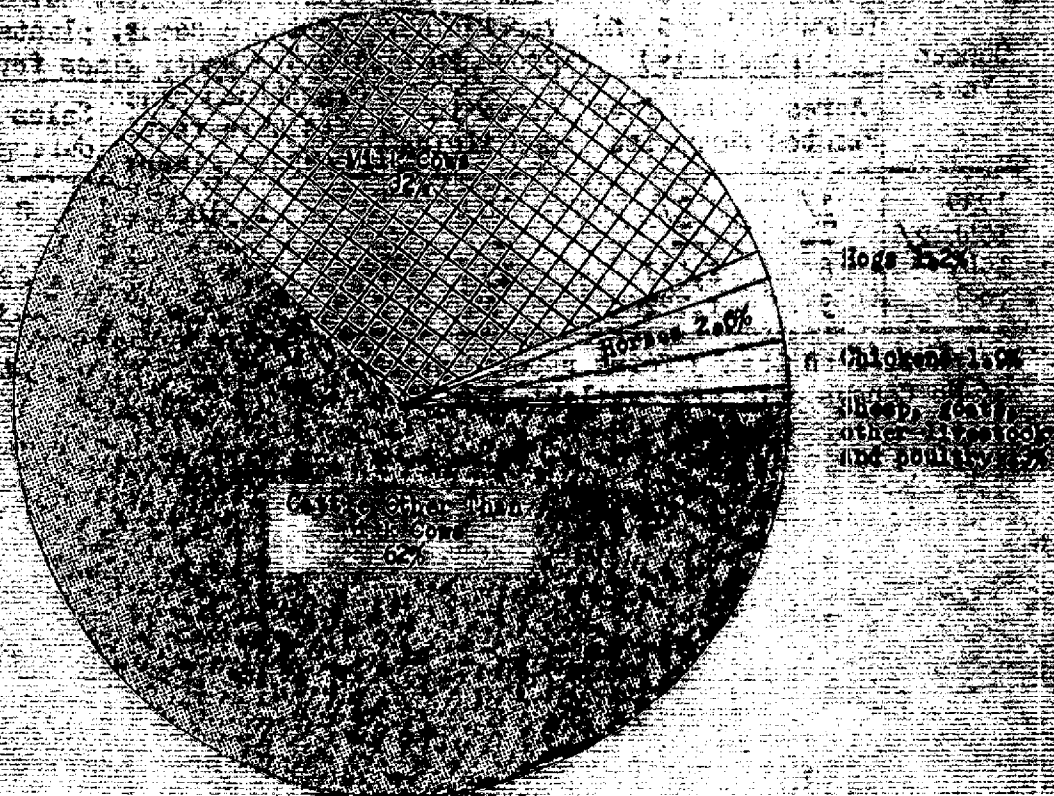


Figure 12.- Value of Livestock on Farms
Mason County, 1951.
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

Livestock Trends

Livestock raising has changed markedly since 1920. The overall value of herds and flocks has increased. The number of beef cattle has trended downward and there were fewer but more productive milk cows in Mason County in 1956 than in 1939. There have been distinct downward trends since 1939 in the number of horses, mules, hogs and sheep raised on farms. Poultry raising has been decreasing as a farm operation. The number of layers kept has also decreased since the peak years in 1940-45. Livestock farming has gone up and down with changes in employment conditions off the farms and in sales opportunities resulting from new areas of competition in the Puget Sound market area. Increased cost of feeding is a major reason for reductions in herds and flocks.

Cattle: Dairy and Beef Farming

Dairy and beef cattle combined totaled a new high of 6,000 head in 1956. They are kept on 415 farms or over 80 percent of all the farm places in the county. Since 1954 the beef breeds have out-numbered dairy cattle. Many farms have dual-purpose cattle or both milk and beef breeds.

Table 20.- Cattle on Farms
Mason County, 1939-1956

| Year | All Cattle (head) | Beef Cattle ^{1/} (head) | Dairy Cattle (head) |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1939 | 4,000 | 700 | 3,300 |
| 1940 | 4,100 | 800 | 3,300 |
| 1941 | 4,000 | 400 | 3,600 |
| 1942 | 4,300 | 300 | 4,000 |
| 1943 | 4,500 | 400 | 4,100 |
| 1944 | 4,600 | 300 | 4,300 |
| 1945 | 4,600 | 600 | 4,000 |
| 1946 | 3,900 | 500 | 3,400 |
| 1947 | 3,999 | 800 | 3,100 |
| 1948 | 4,000 | 1,300 | 2,700 |
| 1949 | 4,100 | 1,600 | 2,500 |
| 1950 | 4,100 | 1,600 | 2,500 |
| 1951 | 4,000 | 1,500 | 2,500 |
| 1952 | 3,900 | 1,400 | 2,500 |
| 1953 | 5,000 | 2,100 | 2,900 |
| 1954 | 5,700 | 3,300 | 2,400 |
| 1955 | 5,900 | 3,500 | 2,400 |
| 1956 | 6,000 | 3,600 | 2,400 |

^{1/} Beef cattle includes some calves for vealers and dairy type steers.

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimates Divn.
State of Washington

Several conditions have caused a change over from dairy to beef livestock raising since 1939. During World War II and after 1950 off-farm employment was good, leading many small scale, part-time farmers to abandon dairying and

take up beef raising which required fewer hours of labor. New state regulations and sanitation laws for the manner in which grade A or fluid milk for household consumption is handled on farms caused many small producers to abandon dairying because the costs in equipment could not be borne. Feeding and labor costs also caused some to give up dairy farming.

The majority of the cattle population is located in the Skokomish River Valley. About 2,770 cattle on 126 farms, averaging 22 head per farm, are located in this area. The Shelton area has about 1,575 head kept on 116 farms averaging 14 head per farm. Another part of Mason County having cattle is the Good Canal-Belfair area with 149 cattle on 40 farms for an average of about 10 head per herd.

The Mason dairy farmers, through their cooperative marketing association and other outlets, sell about 5,880,000 pounds of whole milk and 12,200 pounds of cream annually. Some is factory milk used for cheese. Commercial milk production and cream and butter sales, however, are below the volume of the 1940s. Mason County is generally a self-sufficient milk area with much of the milk processed or consumed within the county. The Census of 1954 did not record commercial farm butter sales, but 121 farm households reported churning butter for their own use.

Table 21. - Dairy Products Sold From Farms
Mason County, 1939-1954

| Year | Whole Milk Sold From Farms | | Cream Sold From Farms | | Butter Sold From Farms | |
|------|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| | (pounds) | (dollars) | (pounds) | (dollars) | (pounds) | (dollars) |
| 1939 | 7,072,900 | \$102,560 | 77,935 | \$19,485 | 1,190 | \$335 |
| 1944 | 6,492,300 | 207,755 | 71,965 | 36,700 | 1,015 | 490 |
| 1949 | 5,003,995 | 225,830 | 23,150 | 11,315 | 1/ | 1/ |
| 1954 | 5,879,170 | 289,525 | 12,225 | 6,460 | 1/ | 1/ |

1/ No Census data were enumerated.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Poultry Farming: Chickens, Eggs, Turkeys and Ducks

Mason is the thirtieth ranking poultry county in Washington. In dollar value of products sold from farms, poultry raising is the fourth major type of farming according to the 1954 Census of Agriculture. Sales of eggs, fryers, other meat chickens, turkeys and other poultry returned an estimated \$76,000 to Mason farmers in 1954.

Commercial egg production is the leading part of the poultry industry. About 100,800 dozen were produced in 1954 on a total of 116 poultry farms. The number of chickens kept on hand for egg production has ranged from 15,200 to 29,300 birds. There are fewer chickens and fewer poultry farms in Mason County than there were before World War II. While egg production has trended downward, the raising of fryer and broiler chickens has been increasing. Three farms were specializing in broilers in 1954, selling about 16,000 birds worth a total of \$14,500. Fryer chickens were in second position in the poultry

product industry making up 19 percent of the total.

Table 22.- Chickens, Egg Production, Turkeys

| Year | Chickens (birds) | Egg Production (dozens) | Turkeys Raised (birds) |
|------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1939 | 24,607 | 226,894 | 1,191 |
| 1944 | 29,296 | 203,333 | 3,311 |
| 1949 | 16,957 | 88,734 1/ | 346 |
| 1954 | 15,212 | 200,890 1/ | 408 |

1/ Eggs sold by farmers; does not include eggs consumed on farms.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Turkeys raised for market in the 1950's are fewer than in 1939. About 300-500 turkeys are raised each year in small flocks on about 15 farms. In 1954, six farms specialized in breeding and hatchery production of turkeys. Heavy breeds of turkeys are the main types raised. Between 1950 and 1955 there was an increased interest in raising ducks. Farms keeping ducks increased from 22 to 33 and the number raised went up from 200 to 330. There are no large commercial duck farms in the area.

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold
in 1954 - \$76,850

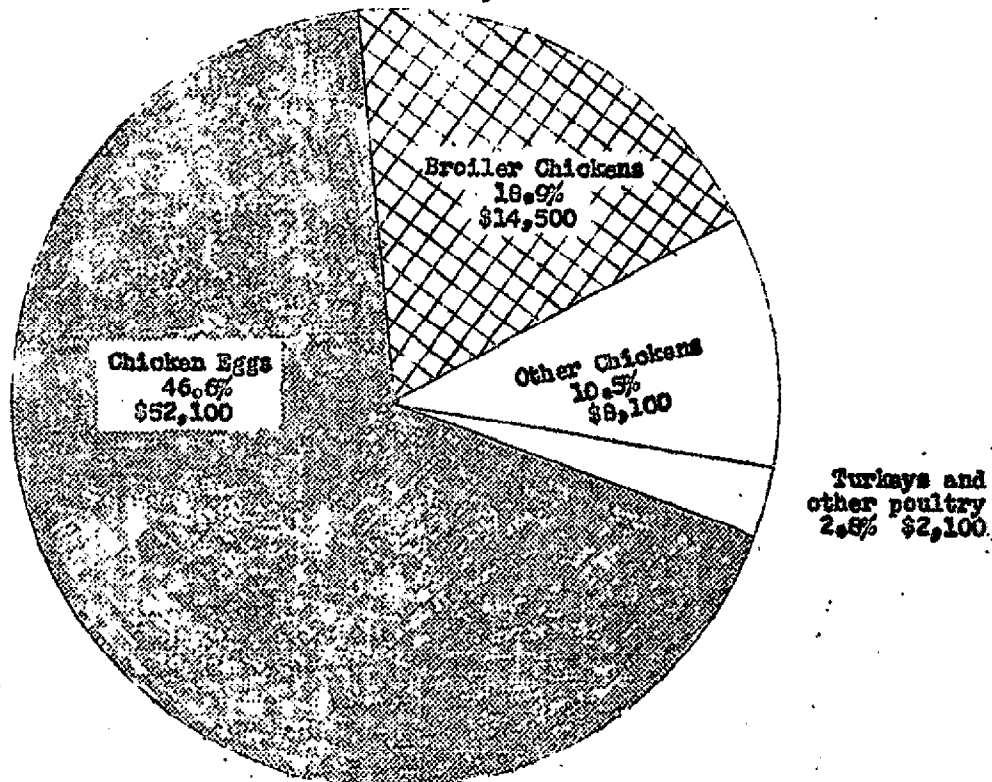


Figure 13.- Divisions of Mason County Poultry Industry
By Products Sold in 1954
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

Hogs

Hogs are a minor type of livestock raised in Mason County. They reached their greatest number in recent years in 1944 when about 640 head were kept on 158 farms, an average of nearly four head per farm. Interest in raising swine fell off by 1954 to about 240 head kept on 63 farms. Hogs are kept mainly as a sideline on dairy and poultry farms in the Shelton and Allyn districts. A considerable number of farms keep one or two feeder hogs for slaughter and farm household use. This practice, common before 1940, has become less in recent years as more rural people buy meat from stores and abandon butchering on the farm. This trend has caused a reduction in feeder hogs kept on farms.

Table 23. Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules
Mason County, 1939-1954

| Year | Hogs (head) | Sheep (head) | Horses and Mules (head) |
|------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1939 | 383 | 140 | 425 |
| 1944 | 639 | 213 | 420 |
| 1949 | 322 | 81 | 253 |
| 1954 | 239 | 88 | 136 |

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Horses and Mules

Horses and mules for farm work, logging and transportation have decreased in the last 30 years, being replaced by tractors, trucks and other machines. There were about 680 horses and mules in Mason County in 1920. By 1954 there were only 136 head enumerated by the Census. Nearly all the horses are used for recreation such as riding and as pack horses. Horses are most common in the Skokomish Valley and near forest centers on Hood Canal.

Sheep

As in many other areas in western Washington, sheep raising has been decreasing in Mason County in recent years. From a high in 1944 of nearly 250 head, sheep have decreased to about 90 head in 1954. The number of farms raising sheep has declined only slightly during this period, showing a trend toward smaller-sized flocks. The average number of sheep kept per farm is about 7 head. Sheep graze on rivers or woodland pastures, broken fern patches and sloping brush land common in the area.

Goats, Rabbits and Fur Animals

The raising of goats as a sideline is on a downward trend in Mason County as well as over the state in general. Goats are now kept on about 22 farms compared with 17 in 1950. The goat population, however, has decreased, being 136 head in 1954 compared with 354 in 1940. Nearly all the goats are of the dairy type and their products are used mainly on the farms or marketed in local neighborhoods. Some goats are owned to keep down brush, grass and weeds surrounding orchards and farmsteads. Rabbits are kept on about 80 farms with

a few commercial rabbitries selling in the commercial market. Fur farming has been on an increase particularly in chinchilla, with nine farms, mostly in the Shelton area, reported in 1957. Commercial and part-time farms which sell small animals and their products number about 16 and their total gross sales amounted to nearly \$12,000 per year when last enumerated in 1949.

Bees and Honey

The last agricultural Census of beekeeping in Washington in 1950 showed Mason County to be a small producer of honey, ranking thirty-fourth in the state in production of honey. About 20 hives were kept on 10 farms. This indicates that beekeeping is mainly for farm-household use and for some neighborhood sales. Those keeping bees averaged two hives per farm. Beekeeping is not as common as it was in the earlier years of settlement. In the 1920 Census there were 993 hives enumerated in Mason County. This was 50 times greater than the number of hives found in the 1950 Census.